

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 SAJ-01 ACDA-19 NIC-01

MC-02 OMB-01 AID-20 EB-11 TRSE-00 /163 R

DRAFTED BY ARA-EP/P:MFRECHETTE:ET

APPROVED BY ARA-LA/EP:SMPRINGLE

ARA/PAF:WDIEDRICH (SUBS)

OSD/ISA:COL MCCARTHY (SUBS)

S/PRS:IPERNICK (SUBS)

EUR/SOU:RMILES (SUBS)

ARA-BC/C:AISAACS

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: DECONTROL DECEMBER 31, 1973

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, PE, US, CI, UR

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR STORY ON SOVIET

TANKS IN PERU

1. DECEMBER 17 CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR CARRIES FOLLOWING
STORY BY BEN WELLES DATELINED WASHINGTON.

2. BEGIN QUOTE - THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEGUN UNLOADING
40-TON MEDIUM TANKS IN PERU, ACCORDING TO HIGHLY RELIABLE
SOURCES HERE.

THE TANKS, BELIEVED TO HAVE ARRIVED BY FREIGHTER FROM
VLADIVOSTOK ON RUSSIA'S PACIFIC COAST, ARE THE FIRST OF AN

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ESTIMATED SHIPMENT OF TWO DOZEN T-54'S RECENTLY PURCHASED
BY THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT.

THEY ARE SIMILAR TO THE T-54'S RUSSIA PROVIDED NORTH

VIETNAM AND EGYPT AND WHICH EGYPT USED WITH SIGNAL EFFECT

IN THE RECENT WAR WITH ISRAEL. THEIR ROLE IN PERU, HOWEVER, OTHER THAN FOR PRESTIGE OR STREET CONTROL IS A PUZZLE TO MILITARY EXPERTS. MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC INFORMANTS HERE SAY THAT THIS IS THE FIRST KNOWN DELIVERY OF IMPORTANT SOVIET MILITARY GROUND EQUIPMENT TO A GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AMERICA. HITHERTO MOSCOW HAS SHIPPED TANKS AND ARMORED CARS ONLY TO CUBA'S CASTRO GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, SOVIET SMALL ARMS HAVE BEEN SMUGGLED TO LATIN AMERICAN LEFT-WING GROUPS FOR YEARS.

SMUGGLING COMMON

THE SMALL-ARMS SMUGGLING HAS BEEN CONDUCTED BY SUCH THIRD PARTIES AS CUBA AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA. QUANTITIES OF SOVIET SMALL ARMS, FOR INSTANCE, DELIVERED QUIETLY BY CUBA TO THE ALLENDE GOVERNMENT OF CHILE, WERE DISCOVERED WHEN THE CHILEAN MILITARY JUNTA SEIZED POWER IN SEPTEMBER. SEASONED DIPLOMATS AND OFFICIALS HERE THINK IT UNLIKELY - THOUGH NOT IMPOSSIBLE - THAT THE TANKS FOR PERU PRESAGE A SOVIET DRIVE TO OFFER ARMS TO LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS AND THUS UNDERCUT TRADITIONAL U.S. STRATEGIC AND TRADE INTERESTS IN THIS AREA. WHILE THEY EXPECT THAT SOVIET TECHNICIANS MAY INSTRUCT THE PERUVIANS IN TANK USE AND MAINTENANCE THEY DO NOT EXPECT TO SEE PERU ACCEPT A LARGE SOVIET MILITARY MISSION. FOR ONE THING, THEY NOTE, THE PERUVIAN MILITARY GOVERNMENT HEADED BY GEN. JUAN VELASCO ALVARADO MAY BE ULTRA-NATIONALIST AND EVEN SOCIALIST - BUT IT IS NOT PRO-COMMUNIST. ITS FREQUENTLY STRIDENT ANTI-U.S. LINE - ESPECIALLY DURING RECENT NEGOTIATIONS FOR REFORM OF THE CHARTER OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES - IS ATTRIBUTED MAINLY TO "GRANDSTANDING" FOR LATIN AUDIENCES. INFORMANTS SAY THAT ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO GENERAL VELASCO'S CLOSE COLLEAGUE, GEN. EDGARDO MERCADO JARRIN, WHO IS BOTH PRIME MINISTER AND ARMY MINISTER, VISITED MOSCOW. THE TANK DEAL IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN CONSUMMATED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEN. THESE INFORMANTS POINT OUT THAT GENERAL MERCADO'S TRIP FOLLOWED AT LEAST TWO YEARS OF FRUITLESS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE U.S. DURING WHICH PERU SOUGHT TO BUY ARMAMENTS, INCLUDING TANKS, BUT WAS TURNED DOWN OWING TO CONGRESSIONAL BANS. THE BANS - WHICH THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS REPEATEDLY PROTESTED AS DEPRIVING IT OF NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY - INCLUDE THE HICKENLOOPER AND GONSALEZ AMENDMENTS. BOTH RESTRICT U.S. "AID," EVEN WEAPONS SALES FOR CASH, TO COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE EXPROPRIATED PRIVATE AMERICAN ASSETS WITHOUT PROMPTLY AND ADEQUATELY COMPENSATING

THE AMERICAN OWNERS.

THE BANS WERE FIRST IMPOSED ON PERU WHEN THE PRESENT RULING JUNTA, AFTER SEIZING POWER ON OCT. 3, 1968, EXPROPRIATED THE DOLS ONE HUNDRED MILLION AMERICAN-OWNED INTERNATIONAL PETROLEUM CORPORATION. THE SEIZURE WAS WIDELY APPLAUDED IN PERU AND ELSEWHERE IN THE HEMISPHERE. PERU, MOREOVER, HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT INTENDS TO NATIONALIZE - THOUGH NOT EXPROPRIATE - THE DOLS TWO HUNDRED MILLION CERRO DE PASCO MINING COMPLEX WHICH

HAS BEEN OPERATING IN PERU FOR MORE THAN SEVENTY YEARS AND WHICH INCLUDES COPPER AND OTHER VALUABLE MINERALS. IT IS ALSO AMERICAN-OWNED AND PERU INTENDS TO BUY AT LEAST THE CONTROLLING INTEREST - IF NOT ALL OF IT.

U.S. MISSION BUSY

A .U.S. NEGOTIATING MISSION, HEADED BY JAMES GREENE, A FORMER STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL AND NOW AN EXECUTIVE OF THE MANUFACTURERS HANOVER BANK OF NEW YORK, HAS MADE REPEATED VISITS TO, AND IS CURRENTLY IN LIMA. THE MISSION IS SAID TO BE NEARING AGREEMENT TO ELIMINATE ALL SOURCES OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES EXCEPTING ONLY THE IPC CASE WHICH PERU INSISTS ON TREATING SEPARATELY. THE SOVIET TANK DELIVERY THEREFORE, IS SURFACING AT A SENSITIVE MOMENT, ALTHOUGH INFORMED SOURCES HERE INSIST THAT THIS IS ALMOST CERTAINLY COINCIDENTAL. THEY DO NOT, FOR INSTANCE, THINK THAT IT IS A PERUVIAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BARGAINING TACTIC TO WARN THE U.S.: "AGREE WITH US OR WE WILL TURN TO MOSCOW FOR WEAPONS." END QUOTE
3. DEPARTMENT CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE IS AS FOLLOWS:
Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THE STORY BY BEN WELLES IN THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR TO THE EFFECT THAT PERU HAS PURCHASED TANKS FROM THE USSR?
A. I HAVE NO COMMENT AND WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT IS IN THE BEST POSITION TO ADDRESS THAT QUESTION.
IF PRESSED AND ON BACKGROUND BASIS ONLY: THERE ARE REPORTS TO THIS EFFECT BUT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY CONFIRMED. DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN WAS NOT REPEAT NOT ASKED ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STORY AT NOON PRESS BRIEFING ON DECEMBER 17.

4. ON DECEMBER 17 DOD PRESS SPOKESMAN COMMENTED AS FOLLOWS (NOT OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT) ON STORY. "WE DO THINK THAT ITS CORRECT THAT SOME TANKS APPARENTLY HAVE BEEN PROMISED OR DELIVERED TO PERU FROM THE SOVIET UNION BUT WHAT THEIR LONG RANGE INTENTIONS

MIGHT BE OR WHAT THE SIZE OF THE SALE MIGHT BE WE JUST
DON'T KNOW."
WHEN PRESS FOR FURTHER DETAILS HE SAID "WE JUST
DON'T KNOW." WHEN ASKED WHEN DID YOU BECOME AWARE OF
THIS?" HE REPLIED "I DON'T KNOW WHEN OUR PEOPLE BECAME
AWARE OF IT. BASICALLY, I THINK THAT THE STORY IS
ESSENTIALLY CORRECT." WHEN ASKED IF THIS SALE REPRESENTED
A NEW SOVIET THREAT HE REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO
CHARACTERIZE IT. FOREGOING ON DOD PRESS BRIEFING IS
NOT RPT NOT FROM OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT AND IS FOR EMBASSY'S
INFORMATION ONLY. RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, ARMS SHIPMENTS, TANKS (COMBAT VEHICLES), PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE245850
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ARA-EP/P:MFRECHETTE:ET
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 DECONTROL DECEMBER 31, 1973
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731257/abqcekhp.tel
Line Count: 176
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27-Sep-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <07 MAR 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR STORY ON SOVIET TANKS IN PERU
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, PE, US, CI, UR, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, (WELLES, BEN)
To: LIMA INFO SANTIAGO
MOSCOW
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005